



Six podium finishes for Para GB in Slovakia

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British athletes won six medals in the team events on the final day of the PTT Slovakia Open in Bratislava.

Sue Gilroy and Megan Shackleton (women's class 4-5), Fliss Pickard (women's class 6-7), Jack Hunter-Spivey (men's class 5), Billy Shilton (men's class 8), Ashley Facey Thompson and Josh Stacey (men's class 9-10) all took silver and David Wetherill and Martin Perry (men's class 6) taking bronze in their respective events.

Women's class 4-5: Sue Gilroy and Megan Shackleton began with a 2-0 win over the Serbian/Croatian partnership of Zorica Popadic and Jelena Sisic and another 2-0 win against Wijitra Jaion from Thailand and the Turkish player Irem Oluk ensured that they topped the group.

A 2-1 win in the semi-finals against Edith Sigala Lopez and Martha Verdin from Mexico took them through to the final against the powerful Serbian combination of Paralympic champion Borislava Peric-Rankovic and bronze medallist Nada Matic and the world champions took the final 2-0 and the gold.

"We played really well as a team," said Gilroy, "particularly yesterday. Today we weren't as consistent in our doubles and I didn't play as well in the singles. I had a good first set against Peric but then made too many errors.

"I'm pleased with silver after being out for so long but disappointed in my performance today. Hopefully I will come back stronger in Slovenia on Wednesday and our team performance will get stronger throughout the year."

"I'm really proud to have reached the final out here," said Shackleton. "We battled really hard but unfortunately it just wasn't enough today.

"I'm really proud of my singles performance to reach the quarter-finals and really push the Paralympic bronze medallist to 11-9 in the fifth, especially after a disappointing Italian Open a few weeks ago. I'm looking forward to trying to continue my form in Slovenia next week."

Women's class 6-7: Fliss Pickard and her partner Maryna Lytovchenko, the class 6 world No 3 from Ukraine, beat the Australian/Hungarian team of Rebecca Julian and Dora Molnar 2-0 and followed that with a 2-0 win against the German team of class 6 world No 6 Stephanie Grebe and class 7 Bente Harenberg. They had to settle for silver after losing their final match in the round-robin competition against top seeds Seong Ok Kim and Kunwoo Lee from Korea 2-0.

"This tournament has been a great learning experience," said Pickard, "especially playing with Maryna. My level definitely improved in the team event and I hope to carry that on in Slovenia."

Men's class 5: Jack Hunter-Spivey and regular team partner Tommy Urhaug from Norway started with a 2-1 win against the Dutch team of Gerardus Van Grunsven and Sem Roelofs and followed that with a 2-1 win against Nicolas Savant-Aira and Alexandre Delarque from France.

A 2-0 win against the Serbian team of Mitar Palikuca and Milan Zelen took them through to the semi-finals as group winners and they progressed to the final with a 2-1 win against the German/Croatian partnership of Joerg Didion and Tomislav Spalj.

Hunter-Spivey and Urhaug also had to settle for silver after losing the final 2-0 to the Turkish team of European champion Ali Ozturk, Hamza Caliskan and Abdullah Ozturk.

"I feel I've had a good competition," said Hunter-Spivey. "It showed I have a never-say-die attitude to fight back and win matches like I did. Tommy and me had some tough matches in the team and pushed Turkey all the way in the final. They just had too much for us today. Overall I'm feeling good heading into Slovenia."

Men's class 6: David Wetherill and Martin Perry were 2-0 winners against the Slovakian team of Alexander Nagy and Gabriel Csemy but after a 2-0 loss to Pavao Jozic and Vjekoslav Gregorovic from Croatia they needed to beat the Japanese team of Kazuki Shichino and Junki Itai in their final match to progress.

A 2-1 win secured second place in the group and a place in the semi-final against the in-form Christian Dettoni and Nicolas Pino Lorca from Chile which they lost 2-0.

"I didn't feel that I played my best in the singles event," said Perry, "but in the team event I was feeling a lot more confident in myself and my ability to grind out a result."

"In the semi-final I think I played my best table tennis at this tournament – I was a lot more positive and aggressive and it proved fairly successful. Despite losing my singles 12-10 in the fifth I know that's the way I want to play next week in Slovenia and if I can replicate that level of play I am sure the results will come."

Men's class 8: With Aaron McKibbin not playing the team event here, 19-year-old Billy Shilton partnered the Italian Samuel De Chiara and they started with a tough match against the European champions Viktor Didukh and Ivan Mai that the Ukrainians won 2-0.

That left Shilton and De Chiara needing to beat Phisit Wangphonphathanasiri and Parinya Keereerut from Thailand to progress and a 2-0 win saw them into a semi-final against Richard Csejtey from Slovakia and the Ukrainian Roman Vakarash.

A 2-0 win earned them a final match against the European champions Ukraine and after a great performance to win the doubles, Shilton lost to world No 1 Didukh and De Chiara was beaten by world No 4 Mai to secure the gold for Ukraine.

"I feel that it has been a good tournament for me," said Shilton, "and I am happy with my performance and to take a medal in the team with Samuel. The singles competition was good as I felt that I had some tough matches that went in my favour and every time I play a top player now I really believe that I have a chance to win."

Men's class 9-10: Ashley Facey Thompson and Josh Stacey started well with a 2-0 win against the Brazilian team of Diego Moreira and Lucas Dos Santos Carvalho but then lost 2-0 to the Czech team of class 10 world No 7 Ivan Karabec and David Pulpan.

A 2-0 win in their final group match against the Ukraine/Hungary partnership of class 9 singles gold medallist Lev Kats and Barnabas Retter took them through to the quarter finals where they beat Bunpot Sillapakong from Thailand and Chao Ming Chee from Malaysia 2-0.

They reached the final with a 2-0 win against the Japanese team of Koyo Iwabuchi and Nobuyuki Suzuki but once again found Karabec and Pulpan just too strong and the Czech partnership took the gold.

"As it was the first time that Josh and I have played together I thought it was a good competition for us," said Facey Thompson, "especially as we were without Kim (Daybell) and we weren't seeded. We both played well in the doubles and we learned a lot so we can look forward to playing the team event in Slovenia next week."

"I think as a team Ash and I did very well considering it was the first time we have played together," agreed Stacey. "It was an enjoyable experience and I'm excited about playing the team event with him again in Slovenia."

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